

GUIDE

A Publication of the Paulist Fathers

CATHOLICS AND ECUMENISM

Today's climate is more favorable for the discussion of re-union than it has been for centuries.

Rev. John B. Sheerin, C.S.P.

✓ ECUMENISM AND CONVERSIONS

Are these two apostolates incompatible? How can they be pursued harmoniously?

Rev. Charles Boyer, S.J.

JANUARY 1960, No. 144



RT. REV. MSGR.
JOSEPH J. MULLEN, STD
1227 ANSEL RD.
CLEVELAND 8, OHIO



IT SEEMS TO ME

Getting to Know You

"How can we understand each other if we never meet?" This was the observation of the Coptic (Orthodox) Patriarch of Alexandria to the Apostolic Delegate to Egypt, when the latter brought the invitation of Pius IX to be reconciled and to attend the Vatican Council.

The reunion of now tragically divided Christendom will come when God wills it. But it is necessary for all who call themselves Christian to prepare for this desired grace. And next to intense prayer for reunion, it is necessary that Catholics meet with our Separated Brethren. There is little hope for reconciliation where divided brothers glare at each other, avoid each other or permit an iceberg of indifference to separate them.

Doubtless, the doctrinal differences between ourselves and our Separated Brethren are the fundamental cause of separation. But how can we ever hope to heal these breaches if we never sit down together and discuss them?

"Separations form a melancholy series of landmarks in the history of Catholic Christianity," observes Father Congar. "But the worst thing is that the separations have lasted and that their very persistence has become not only a matter of habit and fact but a new motive for separate life. We have got into the way of living without each other. . . .

"The mere fact of not being on terms," continues this understanding theologian, "has become a fresh motive, and often the most prominent one, for remaining apart. Just as it might be between relations or friends—some trivial cause for anger, and instead of coming together again and renewing amity it has seemed more dignified to sulk, to give the cold shoulder, and not to make the first advances.

"That can go on for a long time; it can result in the breaking up of a home or the end of a long standing friendship. It creates a situation of severed relationship which presently enters in as a factor in itself, and becomes the real cause of the established rupture, over and above the original misunderstanding."

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

GUIDE, No. 144, JANUARY, 1960

Published 10 times a year (monthly except June-July, August-September when bi-monthly) by The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 180 Varick Street, New York 14, N. Y. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at New York, N. Y. Rates 1 year, \$1.00; 10¢ a copy; 5¢ a copy in bulk to Seminarians.

Catholics and Ecumenism

By Reverend John B. Sheerin, C.S.P.

On January 25th Pope John startled the Christians of the world by announcing he would convene an Ecumenical Council, the first in ninety years. He did not specify the date of the Council nor the names of those persons who would be invited. An Ecumenical Council is of course a gathering of all the Catholic bishops of the world but the Pope in his announcement said that the Council would be "an occasion" for separated Christians to seek unity. This gave rise to a great amount of speculation as to the possibility that representatives of non-Catholic denominations might be invited.

On September 1st at Castlegandolfo, the Holy Father stated that the Council would have as its primary aim the modernization of Church discipline, administration and law but he also said that separated Christians can participate in the Council since they derive historically from the Church and must consider the Catholic Church as something of their own.

What are the prospects for the return of the Orthodox? Let me phrase my answer to *that* question in this fashion: the prospects for amiable discussions and fruitful dialogue between Roman Catholics and Orthodox are brighter than they have been for centuries. The Pope himself is well-liked by the Orthodox clergy (except for certain individuals like Metropolitan Nikolai of Moscow). Before becoming Pope, Archbishop Roncalli had many and varied contacts with the Orthodox in his twenty years as Apostolic Delegate or Apostolic Visitor in Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece. The Orthodox in

Greece have a special affection for him because he directed Papal Relief in Greece in the 1942 famine that took some 300,000 lives.

Orthodox reaction to Pope John's announcement of a Council has been favorable. Thus far, of course, the reaction has been unofficial. An official response can come only from a meeting of the heads of the fourteen national churches and no such pan-Orthodox meeting has been held nor has the Patriarch of Constantinople, who holds primacy of honor in Orthodoxy, made any move in the direction of summoning such a meeting. Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople said some months ago that the Orthodox would not attend the Council unless at least one member of the World Council was invited but again this is merely his own private opinion.

ORTHODOX VIEWS

What is the general situation of the Orthodox Church as related to the Roman Catholic Church? In the following description of the Orthodox attitude, I am simply expressing the views of an Orthodox theologian who is a personal friend and who, in my opinion, is thoroughly acquainted with all phases of the reunion question.

As he sees the problem, there are non-theological and theological differences. The non-theological include all those unfortunate personal, national and other purely human episodes in the course of history that preceded or followed the Schism. When the Roman Empire split in two, it was inevitable that the cultured Byzantines of the Eastern Empire should have a different psychology and perspective from the West which had been over-run by barbarians.

This cultural difference led to a hostility that was aggravated by events such as the forced conversions of Roman Catholics by Orthodox politicians and from the other side of events such as the Crusades in which Western Christians defaced churches in Constantinople. The Schism, even aside from the religious aspect, has been a terrible human tragedy and both sides have to repent for what they did. Many recent articles in Orthodox and Catholic journals have expressed regret for the sins of the past.

NO REAL EXCHANGE

As for theological differences, there are individual doctrines on which both sides disagree: Papal infallibility, Filioque, Immaculate Conception, Purgatory . . . and both sides have been shouting arguments at each other fruitlessly for many bitter years. But to a large degree each side has been using its own language and so there was no real exchange of views. That is, each side has had a different theological approach and the theological terms used by one often have had little meaning for the other. "Primacy," for instance, has meant something different in Rome and Constantinople.

Today, however, Roman Catholic and Orthodox thinkers are coming closer to each other in their theological approach. For example, the Orthodox have looked upon Church unity as a sacramental and mystical unity while the Roman Catholics have stressed the institutional and juridical features of the one Church. As each sacred Eucharistic host contains Christ whole and entire, so the Orthodox have seen Christ whole and entire in each church. We, on the other hand, have looked upon each local church or diocese as part of the whole universal institution established by Christ. The Orthodox did not deny this juridical fact but tended to emphasize the sacramental and mystical features of unity.

Now the gulf between the two approaches is narrowing. Due to the liturgical movement, the new stress on the doctrine of the Mystical Body, the mystique of social action, the emphasis on sanctifying grace, the return to Bible studies and the Fathers, the Roman Catholics in the last decade have been developing a more sacramental and mystical approach. The Orthodox, on the contrary, are acquiring a new sense of the

institutional Church. Whereas they would formerly say, "Let Latins be organized, we are mystical," they now realize that they cannot lean on governments for institutional protection. The gates of Hell have prevailed against the Byzantine Empire and the Czar's government. So the Orthodox are coming to realize the importance of organized institutional structure to protect the inner vitality of the Church.

Thus today the West is more receptive to the mystical and sacramental and the East more receptive to the institutional. As a result Catholics and Orthodox are beginning to discuss their differences within the same frame of reference or, should I say, they are beginning to discuss differences in the same theological language.

What about the Protestants? It would be fatuous to glide over the vast differences between Catholic and Protestant theologians but at least the climate of Catholic-Protestant relations has improved. In the last century, Protestants held on to most of the fundamental Christian teachings but they had no desire to engage in religious dialogue with Catholics. Today they are willing to engage in dialogue but they are abandoning their doctrines. Dogma, no dialogue last century: dialogue, little dogma this century.

REJECTS NATURAL LAW

The Protestant lives by the same fundamental moral code as does the Catholic, that is, the Ten Commandments. But the difference is that the Protestant refuses to accept Natural Law. He claims the framework of his moral conduct is to be found only in the Bible, and so he rejects Natural Law principles as pagan, the pagan ethics of Aristotle imposed upon the simple love ethics of the Bible. Niebuhr allows for the use of reason in solving moral problems but he claims that "Catholic" Natural Law is altogether too inflexible to meet the needs of a rapidly changing social environment.

The crux of the reunion question, however, is the authority of the Church. Were the Protestants to accept the teaching authority of the Church, they would necessarily accept all Catholic doctrines, even those that derive from Natural Law. Now what is the Protestant attitude toward the Catholic concept of the Church? Strange as it may seem, while the Protestants are

*"The old Protestant idea of an invisible Church
of Christ is rapidly losing respectability."*

abandoning a number of individual Christian doctrines, they are at the same time approaching more closely to the traditional Catholic idea of the Church. Jaroslav Pelikan in his book, *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism* (Abingdon), shows that Protestant and Catholic Bible scholars are closing the gap of separation to a surprising degree and he asserts that Tradition, which was a term of opprobrium for the Reformers, "is now becoming an acceptable concept among Protestant theologians and biblical interpreters."

It is the World Council of Churches, however, that is largely responsible for the change in Protestant thinking regarding the Church. Due to the work of the World Council, it can be said that the old Protestant idea of an invisible Church of Christ is rapidly losing respectability. In his latest book, *The Pressure of Our Common Calling*, W. A. Visser't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council, says that John 17, v. 20 ("That all may be one even as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.") is the Magna Charta of the Ecumenical Movement.

He points out that in these words Christ intended that the unity of His Church should be so visible as to make men sit up and take notice that this unity proves He was sent by the Father. It cannot be an esoteric, intangible, abstract unity or a secret conviction in the hearts of Christians. Moreover, Visser't Hooft says Christ's Church must have the unity described by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians (Chapter 4) wherein he speaks of the Church as one body and one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

In the World Council there is very little agreement on just how much organization, how much agreement in doctrine are needed in the true Church of Christ but it is a big step forward for Protestants to think of the Church as necessarily a visible Church.

It was my privilege to be selected to attend the Faith and Order Conference of the World Council of Churches at Oberlin, Ohio, from September 3rd to 10th, 1957.

Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., was also selected as an unofficial observer and so we two priests spent a very interesting week with some 400 Protestant ministers and about 15 representatives of the Orthodox Churches. Father Weigel and I went as unofficial observers because active participation as delegates would have meant we were subscribing to the fundamental theme of the World Council, the pursuit of Christian unity, whereas we Catholics are convinced we already possess Christian unity.

The subject matter for discussion for that week was: The Nature of the Unity We Seek. Should Christians content themselves with inter-communion, co-operation, especially in the mission field, partial mergers or real corporate unity? Most of the delegates seemed to feel that they were dissatisfied with mere loyalty to their own denominations. They wanted to belong to a great universal Church of Christ with one message and the power to redeem from sin.

NO SUPER-CHURCH

But it seemed to me they wanted unity without uniformity, authority in the Church without a strong central authority. They sought unity of witness and service but they did not want anything that looked like a super-church and in fact, one speaker referred to a great church that 400 years ago had become too big and too powerful. The idea was that original sin has corrupted men and the more powerful men become, the greater the danger of sin corrupting them.

I said they recoiled from any proposal for organized unity that looked like a super-church. Why? Dr. Visser't Hooft wrote an article for the *Ecumenical Review* (July, 1958) entitled "The Super-church and the Ecumenical Movement." He cited as a great obstacle to Christian unity the Protestant fear of a super-church that is based on Chapter 17 of the Book of Revelations where there is a reference to Babylon, the harlot that commits fornication with the kings of the earth. The Reformers interpreted this as a reference to the Roman Catholic Church which they claimed had

become powerful, corrupt and politically-minded. Succeeding generations of Protestants continued to look on the Roman Catholic Church in this fashion.

Today, says Dr. Visser't Hooft, Protestant biblical scholars generally agree that the text refers to the Roman Empire which St. John knew to be persecuting Christians. Yet Visser't Hooft points out that you cannot dismiss a phobia or complex merely by disproving it. The phobia of Babylon, the politically-minded ecclesiastical system, is buried deep in the Protestant subconscious. That is why Protestants tend to recoil not only from Roman Catholicism but also from any project in the World Council that smacks of super-church.

Two features of the Oberlin meeting were outstanding. First, the sincerity of the delegates. In earlier days, I understand, many Protestants felt they could achieve unity simply by putting the arm of fellowship about each other. At Oberlin, however, the Protestants were generally unhappy about their divisions and dismissed mere good fellowship as a veneer that would only hide the real differences, the differences over doctrine. One man spoke of "the sin and agony of disunity" and I think that represented the mood of the delegates. Their sincerity was evident too in their consideration of motives for unity. They rejected any purely worldly motive such as co-ordination for the sake of attaining organizational power, and they rejected too any jealous motive such as anti-Romanism. They said their efforts toward unity should be based only on motives to be found in the Gospel.

Another conspicuous feature of the Oberlin meeting was the return to Biblical theology. Several Protestant bishops of the old school told me this was a pronounced change from the early days of this century when good fellowship was considered the key to reunion. In fact, some of the old-timers felt the young Protestant neo-Orthodox theologians were too aggressive at Oberlin. The important fact is that the return to Biblical theology is responsible for progress toward the idea of a visible Church.

Dr. Calhoun of Yale Divinity School gave the best talk of the week. I was agreeably surprised to hear him using Catholic terms such as Creator Spiritus and The Incarnate Word. He even described the Church of Christ as one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. He meant some of these words in a sense

different from ours but the very fact he would use them at all was a surprise to me. He seemed quite convinced that the Church must be a visible, organized Church but he attributed the visible institution not to the design of Christ but to the work of early Christian ecclesiastics who realized they had to create institutional features, like a protective shell, to safeguard the inner Holy Spirit from the ravages of heresy and persecution.

CONTINUE INDIVIDUAL CONVERSIONS

In conclusion, let me urge you to take a vital interest in the Ecumenical Movement. It is well-advanced in Europe (I believe Holland alone has one hundred priests in Ecumenical work). The Friars of the Atonement have been doing the work single-handed here but it will undoubtedly become a regular feature of the American scene in a few years. I realize there are some members of the movement who seem to think that convert work must be put on the shelf temporarily in favor of Ecumenical work.

The Protestant scholar Pelikan argues with a great degree of plausibility in *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism* that the Protestant interested in Catholicism should work for corporate reunion rather than become a convert to Catholicism here and now. Personally I think this is a denial of man's primary duty to save his own soul, and I am sure that many priests have met with "high-church" Anglicans, for instance, who stay out of the Catholic Church under the perilous illusion that they can do more for the Church outside it than within it.

There is no reason why the Ecumenical workers and convert-workers cannot work in unison. Bishop Suenens of Malines in his book, *The Gospel to Every Creature*, showed that the task of converting individuals can be carried on at the same time as the social apostolate, which is a matter of transforming society so it will be ready for the word of God. In the same way, the direct apostolate and the work of corporate conversion can be conducted harmoniously. After all, Christ preached to crowds but He also evangelized individuals. He has asked us to go out into the highways and byways to bring guests into the marriage feast. I don't think He will object if we bring them in one by one rather than in tens and twenties. The important thing is to bring them in.

Ecumenism and Conversions

By Reverend Charles Boyer, S.J.

In the intention of its authors and promoters, ecumenism has always been a movement destined to unite (or at least to tend to unite) the different Christian "churches" in one sole Church of Christ. A *Catholic ecumenism* will then look toward a return of the separated Oriental churches and the Protestant communities to the Roman Church. It is not addressed directly to individuals, but to those bodies of which the individuals are members.

On the other hand, it frequently happens that isolated non-Catholic Christians ask to be received into the Catholic Church. What effect does the return of these individuals have upon a corporative return: are they an obstacle, or an aid, or an accident without appreciable influence? Herein lies a complex problem which all do not solve in the same way, and which, nevertheless, must be well solved if the work of union is to be fruitful. Many think that individual conversions and unionism or "ecumenism" are incompatible. Some among these, believing in the utter impossibility of reunion according to whole bodies, oppose unionistic movements because they believe them to be harmful to individual conversions. Others who have been won over to ecumenism fear that individual conversions are an impediment to the union of large bodies.

There are those who do not believe at all in corporate conversions; that is, those made as a body. Their whole hope and effort is directed toward individual conversions, which they see as being regretfully delayed or impeded by the illusion of an imminent collective reunion. One reason that the English Catholics in general pronounced

themselves hostile to the conversions of Malines was that they expected the number of individual conversions to decrease because of them. It seems to me that to arrive at a rational solution of the problem, the following questions must be answered:

1. In what measure may one hope for a return as a body of separated Christians to the unity of the Roman Church?
2. Are individual conversions an obstacle to this return?
3. Is the fear of retarding the unity of all Christians a reason for delaying the conversion of even one soul?

REUNION DISTANT

First of all, may one reasonably hope for a proximate reunion of all Christians in the unity of the true Faith? We have no intention of placing limits upon the power of divine grace, but if one is to judge according to what we may observe at this hour, there appears to be no likelihood that such a happy event is near. The divergences are too deep and too varied to disappear completely in a short time. Yet one may consider certain particular bodies among them as separate from the others and estimate with some probability the likelihood of union they offer.

If, for instance, one considers those separated Christians whom Pius XI called "those venerable Eastern Christian communities" one finds reasons militating in favor of their re-entrance into Catholic unity which are so cogent that one may hope for it without temerity. The most probable supposition would be that some one of the autocephalic Churches, or at least some important group from a Church, ask to be united

* Courtesy of UNITAS, published by the Friars of the Atonement, Peckskill, N. Y. (A condensation.)

without waiting for the others to accompany it.

In such a case we would have more properly a union as a body, or "corporate" in the sense that the Church which becomes united remains itself, losing only its state of schism. In fact, Father Jugie has recently maintained that the separated Oriental Churches, recognizing themselves as being unable to define anything since the separation, can without denying themselves renounce their erroneous opinions, accept the entire Catholic doctrine, and consequently become Catholic as Churches.

Protestantism is too divided to be considered as a whole. At least as regards the matter under discussion, one is obliged to say as much of the whole body of Christians grouped under the name of Church of England.

As a matter of fact, it has been maintained that the Church of England could effect its reunion as a body; that is, without abandoning its own principles. Rev. Paul Wattson, S.A., founder of the Octave of Prayer for Unity, in his Anglican days defended this particular thesis with his friend Spencer Jones. These authors asked why, if the Church of England today affirms its continuity with what it was before the Reform, it should not place itself again in dependence upon Rome as it was before Henry VIII. Newman, on his part, attempted to give a Catholic sense to the Thirty-nine Articles, which it will be recalled are not irreformable. The fact is that the continuity of the Anglican Church has been broken in many ways. Whatever the case, a return to Rome on the part of all who belong to the Church of England, including those who are now flirting with modernism, is extremely improbable.

However, within this large community there are parties and smaller groups also for whom accession to full Roman and Catholic unity seems clearly to be the logical conclusion of their recent history.

The Anglo-Catholics, who number perhaps a half million, and certain still more Romanizing communities are on the road, whether they are aware of it or not, which since Newman's time leads to Rome. Groups are likewise found among the Lutherans and Calvinists who seem to be troubled by a longing for true unity. While the reunion of such groups would not be the reunion of Churches, it could, it would

seem, be considered as "corporate," that is, made as a body.

Therefore, in our opinion, it would be an error to consider the strict sense of the term "ecumenism" as merely Utopian, when conceived of as the return to the faith, if not of all the dissidents, at least that of numerous Christians acting as a body. (It is not our intention here to speak of "ecumenism" in the sense of a mere search for mutual comprehension, understanding and good relations among people of different confessions.)

Wherefore, there is reason, in certain cases, for taking into consideration a possibility of corporate reunion, and for inquiring whether this possibility should be a motive for delaying individual conversions. To respond, one may on the one hand hold as conceded that an apostolate inspired by wisdom looks to the most universal good, and that it may, when the attainment of that good requires it, refrain from activity directed toward a lesser good. This is a choice between two goods and which bears upon the greater of them. Therefore, in the case of a general movement which would present a fair likelihood of success, and this in a rather short time, it would be prudent not to seek the attainment of isolated conversions, *if these should halt the general movement.*

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

But there still remain two points to be clarified. When a soul is convinced that the true Church of Christ is the Roman and Catholic Church alone, may it be dispensed from demanding reception into that Church by invoking the reason that it would be more useful outside it for the sake of hastening the return of an entire community, or of an entire denomination, or even of a whole Church? The answer must be *no*. First of all, there is true disloyalty in wishing still to appear that which one is no longer, and to use this false appearance to influence others. Furthermore, and above all, charity certainly begins with one's self. Our soul is confided to ourselves before other souls are confided to us. We must obey Christ to save ourselves. One does not obey Christ if one keeps himself outside the Church which he knows Christ founded. It is plainly this thought which Newman wished to express in concluding his *Essay*

"Is there truly a conflict between individual conversions and corporate conversions?"

on the *Development* with these words: "Time is short and eternity is long."

Wherefore, in the case of conflict between individual conversions and returns made in a body, the doctrine seems clear to us. The apostolate may bear upon the return of the greatest number, but when an isolated conversion has matured nothing permits its delay.

The other question, an extremely important one, is this: is there truly a conflict between individual conversions and corporate conversions; that is, in the concrete, between conversions and "ecumenism"? We believe that this is to be denied. Paul Thurean-Danjin likewise denies it in his biography of Cardinal Vaughan. He writes, "Was it then in arousing souls to a desire for union with Rome and in accustoming them to the idea of a reconciliation with the Pope that conversions were checked? If, perhaps, these conversions were suspended for a moment, a state of mind had been created, nevertheless, which would activate them later. Experience, moreover, bears this out: were not a number of converts enlisted from the former 'unionists'?"

Let it be well noted, though, that the conversion of any body of Christians indeed supposes the conversion of each member of that body. An action should then be exercised which is of a nature to bring about a change in each one of the souls. This action is doubtless accompanied by other influences which affect the whole body. While it remains in harmony with them, these influential factors cannot substitute for a direct approach to the individual souls but at most favor its effect.

There is also the point of view of right. In the case of a spiritual event, only legitimate dispositions are to be considered, which are those resulting from good will. In the case of the Oxford Movement, for instance, one certainly understands the sorrow, the temptation to anger, and the discouragement which the Tractarians experienced in seeing a good number of their companions in combat leave their ranks to pass into the Catholic Church. But, upon reflection, they should accept the sentiments of Pusey and deny nothing of the

road which they had made together with those who now separated. To become spiteful, turn back, refuse to remain in or enter into a movement simply because others who were of it did something which displeased would mean falling from that state of good will which is always to be supposed when a matter of salvation is at stake: "*Omne quod non est ex fide peccatum est.*" (Rom. 14:23)

According to right then, individual conversions ought not to impede the unionistic movements. But may one not go a step further and maintain that, in fact, instead of halting them, they rather favor the group movements and cause them to proceed toward their proper end? The same Oxford Movement offers an example. It is sometimes said that Newman brought it to a halt. Was it really this movement which halted? That which really came to an end—and that not because of Newman's conversion, but because of the Anglican authorities' refusal to enter the way of Tract 90—was the association of a group of courageous and talented men who until then had labored together. That which ceased, or rather was diminished, was the great number and celebrity of conversions. But can we believe that Anglo-Catholics would exist at all today, and these even so in considerable number, if there had been no Oxford Movement? The movement has been transformed, one may say, but perhaps it bears within itself no less unionistic promise than it did then.

NEED ROME'S CO-OPERATION

In turning toward the present situation of the Christian world, we might well order our thoughts in the following way: The greater part of "ecumenists" acknowledge that their movement cannot succeed without the collaboration of the Roman Catholic Church. The conferences of Lambeth have explicitly declared this on several occasions; Father Florovsky said it again last August at Amsterdam: "No true ecumenical co-operation, no true Christian community, no true reunion of Christians can be realized if Rome cannot be included."

This was the idea of Spencer Jones in his

famous book *England and the Holy See*, whose thesis Monsignor Hawks resumes thus: "If there is to be reunion, it cannot take place without the co-operation of Rome; but Rome cannot change without ceasing to be *Rome*; we, however, can change and do change; therefore let us change." But the Catholics know, as do the non-Catholics, or moral, and that consequently the only means of including Rome in a reunion of Christians is to accept her Faith integrally. The result is that Catholics must hold—and the non-Catholics understand that they hold it—that the concrete and real end of unionistic movements is the acceptance by all Christians of the Catholic Faith. With this understanding, the fact that certain ones arrive first at their destination cannot impede others from continuing their journey.

WHY DELAY CONVERSIONS?

Let us see things as they are in actuality, and in this Catholic review, let us see them from the Catholic point of view. We have admitted the possibility of a rather proximate return of certain separated groups. As regards the others, and these are numerous, one may only speak of hope according to a distant perspective. There is more than one leader of the Ecumenical Council who does not see union of all Christians in one faith before the Last Judgment. In any case, the probability is that this unity is still far off. What motive remains, then, for delaying individual conversions to favor ecumenism?

On the contrary, how not to see what great benefit these conversions bring to the cause of true unionism? A conversion gives cause for reflection; it obliges one to question himself; it gives courage to the timid; it clarifies the way for many. When converts stand in the public light for reason of their virtue, their talent, or their position, they so attract by their example that they become capable of liberating a whole movement of conversions. Even in the case of those movements of corporate reunion which promise completion in a near future, we may suppose that nothing would hasten them more than the realization of individual conversions en masse.

Father Paul, founder of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, who had for a time hoped for the corporate reunion of

the entire Church of England, and who after his conversion envisaged another sort of corporate reunion in small groups, recognized also the legitimacy and the importance of individual conversions: "We must not depreciate or seem to disparage the individual process of convert-making. We are much too grateful for our own admission that the Church of Rome cannot renounce anything which constitutes dogma to the Fold of Peter not to stretch out a loving hand to every individual soul, who is contemplating the same step."

We would, to be sure, be the first to demand of the Catholic apostolate that it avoid in its activity all that could legitimately vex the spirit. Prudent zeal gains a hearing. No one can be offended in seeing a Catholic explain his faith with serenity and courtesy, clarify the contested points, or showing the baselessness of objections and prejudices. If an appeal is made to history, let him take care to say nothing which is not correct. Evidently, one is not obliged to sing the praises of those who brought the separations about, but they must be spoken of without any injustice. The more one guards against any air of superiority in controversy, and the urge to personal triumph, and the more one shows himself concerned uniquely with the work of light and charity, the less will he arouse ill-feeling and antagonism.

PRAGMATIC "ECUMENISM"

In making these reflections, we have not only held strictly to Catholic ground, but we have maintained the most exigent concept of "ecumenism," namely, that which wills unity of faith at whatever cost.

A more pragmatic "ecumenism," which is that of a great number, consists in a spirit of comprehension, of understanding, of kindness, even in controversy, and even in dogmatic opposition. I have said nothing against this "ecumenism" which I regard as founded in view of, and as a preparation, perhaps indispensable, for a reunion of Christians in the unity of faith. One should merely recommend to such "ecumenists" not to consider this ideal as something ultimate, because, conceived in this wise, it would favor confusion and religious indifference. Since "Ecumenism" is a movement of charity, it must of its very nature proceed until it reaches the full accomplishment of Christ's will.

Guide Lights

OPERATION UNDERSTANDING . . .

Dale Francis has been engaged for some time in sending a subscription to *Our Sunday Visitor* to an extensive list of Protestant ministers. He also invites correspondence with them. Recently he reported some conclusions he has reached as a result of this exchange of letters with Protestants.

Lutheran clergymen seem closest to us in spirit, he believes. Episcopalians come second—even though they are frequently touchy because we do not regard them as Catholics and deny the validity of Anglican orders. "It is with Lutherans and Episcopalians that it seems to me we have the greatest opportunity for understanding" he concludes.

Mr. Francis has had friendly letters, although fewer, from Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists. "I hear now from Methodist ministers who demonstrate a great love for the Blessed Virgin, who refer to her as our Lady and mean this truly. I have learned of Methodist ministers who have formed a league of daily sacrifice and talked with one who tries every day to visit a Catholic Church to spend some time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

"Among those outside the Church, it can be said that they may be divided between those whose worship is centered on the altar, and those whose worship is centered in the pulpit. Both the Lutherans and the Episcopalians are predominantly altar-centered, although I know there are those in both groups who might object to this. The Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and other evangelical groups have been pulpit-centered groups. The worship service at these churches has traditionally been directed toward the message brought by the minister."

THE AGE OF CONVERTS . . .

Father William F. Manning, C.S.P., of the Catholic Information Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan, recently made a survey of fourteen hundred converts received at the center in the last ten years. One of the most interesting conclusions of this admittedly limited study is the fact that youth predominates.

"In a ten year period only five per cent of converts received were over 50 years of age. The golden era of a person's life, as

far as finding the true faith is concerned, is the years from 18 to 27. The survey revealed that seventy-five per cent of the converts entered the Church during those years of life. Experience in Europe bears out the same conclusions. The normal age of conversion in Western Europe is between 18 and 25.

"People of good will seeking the truth may know the joy of meeting the living God at any moment in their life. But in actual fact, if they don't make the effort early in life, the corrosive atmosphere of every day indifference to religion eats away at their willingness to re-examine and re-evaluate their attitude toward God."

Commenting on the experience of the Paulists in Grand Rapids, Paul Hallett in his column which appears in the *Denver Register*, adds an interesting sidelight on the question of the age of converts. "Of 46 noted American converts whose ages are listed in the current *Catholic Almanac*, 12 persons were 50 years of age or over; 6 were in their 40's; 10 in their thirties, and 18 under thirty. Thus, the number of those over 40 just equalled those under 30. But the converts of over 40 years of age as a whole outshone in eminence the younger group."

THE LEGION OF MARY . . .

Father Francis J. Ripley, superior of the Catholic Missionary Society in England, in an address given to 2,000 members of the Legion of Mary had some sound advice to give on the importance of Mary's Legion.

"I believe that if every praesidium of the Legion were being used to its fullest capacity we would have gone a long way toward solving our major problems which are connected with the leakage, conversion and young people." Father Ripley's work as an assistant priest in four parishes, as a chaplain in the Royal Air Force, and as a member and superior of the Catholic Missionary Society, has strengthened him in the conviction that there is no organization in the Church which could exercise so valuable an apostolate for the salvation of souls.

After giving twelve reasons why this conviction concerning the Legion is still so strong with him, Father Ripley continued: "I regard it as a tragedy that comparatively few praesidia are operating according to

their fullest capacity. Most of them are deficient in numbers, and such members as there are, are not using the Legion machinery for the great things that can be accomplished for God and souls. Recruiting is an urgent necessity; it is the obligation of every Legionary. In particular, there should be ten times as many men in the Legion as there are. It is an organization admirably suited to be an outlet for manly zeal."

BOUQUETS . . .

The Diocesan Radio and TV Guild in Lafayette, La., is sponsoring a diocesan-wide "Television Mission." The seven day mission is being carried over Station KFLY-TV and is being conducted by the Franciscan Fathers. . . .

Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., made a plea for more meetings at the grass roots level between Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Church members. The learned Jesuit participated in a Lutheran-sponsored meeting held in Toledo. Father Weigel's plea for more frank discussion to end hostility and hate carried the reminder that animosity which has become encrusted cannot be cut off in one stroke but must be worn off gradually. He recommended that such meetings be small, that theologians be present, and that the laity should also be invited. . . .

The Home Study of Religion Course, conducted at Woodstock College, the Jesuit seminary, Maryland, recently awarded a diploma to its 2,000th graduate. This mail-order course in Catholic teaching began in 1942 and more than 300 graduates have joined the Catholic Church. These inquirers range from psychiatric social workers to window cleaners. Among last year's students was a sailor who mailed his tests from ports around the world—Hong Kong, Seoul, Istanbul and New York. He was finally received into the Church in New York City.

The tenth anniversary of the Inter-denominational Discussion Center of the Netherlands recently celebrated in Utrecht, indicates how far advanced inter-religious dialogue is in Europe. This discussion center has 60 local circles throughout the Netherlands. Topics discussed by Catholics, Protestants and humanists at these meetings include the question of toleration, religious education and related subjects of common interest. Specific theological questions have not been discussed up to now. Directors of the Center state that the purpose is "to promote a better understanding of one another's views. There are still too many people who think these discussions unnecessary and are afraid of them. No attempt is made to obscure fundamental

GUIDE

- Is subsidized and published by the Paulist Fathers.
- Published 10 times a year (monthly except for combined issues in June-July and in August-September).
- Contains original articles or reprints of special interest to those engaged in the Apostolate to non-Catholics.
- It is intended for Priests and Seminarians, Religious and Laity.
- Annual subscription \$1.00. Single issues 10c. Bulk lots to Seminarians at 5c a copy.

GUIDE

180 VARICK STREET
NEW YORK 14, N. Y.

differences but merely to give a clearer and more accurate picture of each other's position. . . ."

HELPS FOR CONVERT-MAKERS . . .

Chatting with the Redemptorists who staff the Information Center in Washington, D. C., I learn that one of the most effective visual aids they employ is the three part film strip "The Catholic Church in Pictures." These 35mm film strips in color were prepared by Father William Quinlan of St. Gertrude's Church, Franklin Park, Ill. Father Quinlan is one of the original group of priests who got the Chicago Apostolate to non-Catholics under way. There are 300 of these sets of films now in use in convert centers, schools and colleges. If you are interested drop a note for more information to M. A. Cunningham, 5233 W. Warner Avenue, Chicago 41, Ill. . . .

"Everybody's Prayer Book" published by the Catholic Information Society, 214 West 31st St., New York 1, N. Y., is an excellent booklet of prayer to give to inquirers at the beginning of their instruction. . . .

"This is the Mass" is a simple, thorough explanation of the Mass on a 12 inch long-playing plastic record. It is in use in many inquiry classes and for Catholic societies and comes highly recommended by users. Write: The Carmelite Fathers Guild, 55 Demarest Avenue, Englewood, N. J.